

## AMERICA IS CHANGING AND SO IS THE CENSUS

Many of you likely are familiar with the 10-year census. The last census occurred in 2000 and every household in the country received a questionnaire. The census is required by the U.S. Constitution and results are used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and redistrict state legislatures.

Most households in 2000 received a “short form,” which contained seven basic questions. A sample of households received a “long form,” which contained additional questions and provided information on what a community looks like. For instance, how many residents have high school diplomas or college degrees, where is the greatest need for job training programs, how many persons speak a language other than English, how long does it take to get to work, where in the community are veterans and elderly residents located?

The American Community Survey, part of the U.S. Census Bureau’s effort to streamline and improve the census, will replace the long form and provide communities a vibrant, moving picture every year instead of once every 10 years. One local official said, “We are in very fast moving times now and 10 years is like an eternity. If we wait for data for 10 years, we are spending five years putting in resources where we may not need them and missing places where we really should be putting our resources. The American Community Survey benefits us by providing updated information every year—we don’t have to wait ten years.”

Our community and other communities across the country need this information to help determine where to build new roads, schools and senior centers...where to locate everything from coffee shops and hardware stores to bus stops...which areas need bilingual police officers and paramedics. That's because the Census Bureau is changing the way it does business and its changes will affect—and benefit—you.

The ACS will be mailed to a sample of households in all 3,233 U.S. counties and in Puerto Rico each month, beginning in late December 2004. No address will receive the survey more often than once every five years.

Responding to the American Community Survey is mandatory, according to Title 13 of the United States Code. The same law that requires participation also protects the responses on the questionnaire. Census Bureau employees are sworn to protect the confidentiality of information collected in the survey.

For more information about the American Community Survey, visit the Web site:

[www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www).